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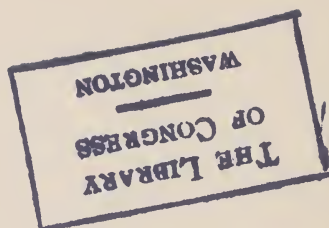
A LETTER DEDICATORY TO THE MOTHER SUPERIOR
OF THE SISTERS OF S. MARY

✓
BY ALGERNON S. CRAPSEY,

Rector of St Andrew's Church, Rochester, N. Y.



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“Without Controversy Great is the Mystery of God-
liness. God manifest in the flesh.”

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ERRATA.

Page 31 line 10, for with read "unto."

" 42 " 4, " woman read "women."

" 43 " 25, " even read "ever."

" 65 " 23, " So read "To."

" 83 " 24, " might read "mighty."

" 95 " 18, " retaining read "returning."

NOTE TO THE READER.

These meditations are presented to you with some hesitation. They treat of matters which can only be handled with reserve. They are not severely logical and are not written for your instruction or admonition. They were written simply for the sake and delight of thinking. You are to read them not as a substitute, but as an aid to thought. The writer has not considered it best to cumber his pages with quotation marks. Whatever is here set down has been long in his mind, and is his by right of possession. The writer ventures to hope that the meditations may be found useful for reading in the family or friendly circle. He has had that in view while writing them.

LETTER DEDICATORY.

*To the Mother Superior of the Sisterhood of
St. Mary :*

DEAR REVEREND MOTHER :—Of the many blessings which God in these latter days has bestowed upon the Church of the English, none is cause for greater gratitude than the revival among us of the art and practice of meditation. This holy exercise is no longer confined to the Latin Communion nor to the religious orders among ourselves, but is a part of the life of an increasing number of men and women who are in, but not of the world. In the open churches which now, to the glory of God, are common with us, may be seen on any day kneeling figures. These souls may be bowed in prayer, but are just as likely to be engaged in meditation ; not so much supplicating God's mercy and grace as contemplating His divine perfections. Meditation is sometimes defined as mental prayer, but this is hardly a proper definition. Prayer is addressed to God. Meditation, on the contrary, is the soul in conversation with itself.

The subject of the conversation being some truth of God that the soul is seeking to see more closely and about which, like the Child Jesus in the temple, it is asking and answering questions. In this act of devotion man communes with his own heart in his chamber and is still. Meditation is really a study in Spiritual Theology. Spiritual Theology does not prove, defend nor arrange the Faith. To prove and explain is the province of Apologetic, to defend of Polemic, to arrange of Dogmatic Theology. When these have all done their work then Spiritual Theology takes from them the Faith as proved, defended and arranged and contemplates it. This, the highest of the Theologies, does not build, she only admires. She goes round about Jerusalem, marks well her bulwarks and tells the towers thereof; she does not conquer or defend, for her warfare is accomplished; she goes in and possesses the land which the sword of the Lord and Gideon have already made her own. She does not plant nor prune the vine and fig tree; she simply enjoys the fruit thereof. Spiritual Theology is not the

man, the lion nor the calf. She is the eagle. She mounts upward as an eagle. On eagle's wings she poises in mid-air, and far above all doubt and mistrust in the clear blue of God's presence she gazes into the heart of the Sun of Righteousness. To engage in the study of Spiritual Theology is therefore the very best employment of our faculties, as all of these are brought into play by an act of meditation. By means of the imagination we make the truth to stand before the eyes of the soul. We place it in the midst of its proper surroundings, setting the apple of gold in its picture of silver. We not only hear or read, we see the truth. When we meditate upon the Passion, our Lord is as evidently crucified before us as He was before the eyes of those of whom it is said that sitting down they watched Him there. With our reason we unfold and examine the truth which the imagination presents to us. We ask the why and the wherefore. We test the truth to see whether it is simple or compound, and what is its origin and nature. We do with it as the chemist does with his ma-

terial. We put it into the crucible of our intellect and separate truth from truth, getting each as nearly pure as we can. We find out whether it is a truth which springs naturally in the heart of man, or whether it comes to him by divine revelation. Whether it is an absolute truth, true always and everywhere, or a relative truth, true only because of some hardness of heart, true only for a given people at a given time. When we have thus ascertained the nature of our truth then we look at it in its relations. We talk of it to ourselves as an astronomer talks of a star. Each star having its own place and glory draws in its train all other stars. The divine law of attraction causes it to send its thrill of sympathy from one end of the heavens to the other, and the "starlight mingles with the stars." So each truth leads to all truth. We have to follow only one ray of light in order to come to the center of the sun. When the understanding has firmly grasped one single truth, and knows its nature and relation, then the life is safe and the mind rests on the solid ground of verity. When the truth is thus

mastered the heart cleaves to it ; the affections embrace it, and there is a marriage between truth and the soul. Then in the bridal chambers of the spirit there is a song of love-singing, My beloved is mine and I am His. He feedeth among the lilies. By resolution the will confirms the desire of the heart. A solemn vow and covenant is made whereby the soul promises to keep the truth ; and however some Joshua may warn and say, Ye cannot serve the Lord, for the Lord your God is holy, still the undaunted will cries out : Nay, but I will serve the Lord, and though truth may plead like Naomi and say turn again, my daughter, go your way, the will shall answer, with Ruth, entreat me not to leave thee, not to return from following after thee, for whither thou goest I will go. Where thou lodgest I will lodge. Thy people shall be my people, thy God my God. Where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried, and God do so to me, and more, also, if ought, but death part me and thee. This steadfast adherence of the will to the truth is the closing act of the meditation, after which the soul

descends from the high place and goes forth into life, careful to make all things according to the pattern seen in the Mount.

Such, Dear and Reverend Mother, is that art of meditation by which the imagination pictures, the reason penetrates, the affections desire and the will appropriates the truth of God. And blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord and in His law will he exercise himself day and night. By the practice of meditation the soul becomes master of truth and is no longer blown about by every wind of doctrine. The trouble with most Christians is that they have no clear conception of Christianity. All is vague and uncertain and they are at the mercy of every gainsayer. They are like an unlearned man in a chemist shop. He sees all the jars arranged in a row with their names upon them. He knows a little about each of them, but not enough to be sure which is medicine and which is poison. The physician comes into the same shop and moves about with the assurance of a man of knowledge. He takes down this and that, selecting at once the bane

and antidote. He has meditated upon the nature of drugs, and therefore he knows. And so the Christian ought to know the truths of his religion and not hold them at the mercy of every pamphleteer and novel writer. If he finds occasion to change his belief, he should do it not from panic, but from strong conviction. And the habit of meditation fosters steadfastness of mind. The meditation has been found helpful, not only in private devotion, but also in the public offices of the church. The spoken meditation has by many priests been considered the best way to make the mysteries of the faith known to their people. It has a power and a charm which the sermon does not possess. Sitting in his chair in the midst of his disciples the man of God is not so much a preacher as a seer, with veiled eyes and unpremeditated thought he tells to listening ears what he sees and hears in the spirit. Like the son of Bosor he falls into a trance, having his eyes open and advertises them of what is now and shall be in the latter day. In retreat the meditation always has the chief

place, the instruction is only a preparation for the meditation. And it is the increasing use of these seasons of retirement which has given such impetus to the practice of meditation. And in the Parish Church it is a frequent substitute for the sermon, especially in the seasons of Advent and Lent. The Five Joyful Mysteries were the subject of the closing meditations at the first retreat, where I served as conductor. This retreat was held for the associates of your order in the Chapel of St. Gabriel in the summer of 1883. When I recall these meditations I am again in the midst of scenes of surpassing spiritual and natural beauty. I stand on the heights of Peekskill with Old Crow Nest in all his rugged grandeur opposite me and look down on the waters of the Hudson that flow between. I see St. Gabriel nestled in the midst of the hills ; I am in that upper room once more with its holy altar, where day by day we offered the unbloody sacrifice. I see the many lights burning. I hear the low chant of the Psalm, the sweet music of the hymn, the monotonous cadence of the pray-

ers. And at Vesper time, when that to me the most beautiful office of the church is sung, then we feel that it is good for us to be here, that this is none other than the house of God ; this is the gate of heaven ; here is the general assembly and church of the first-born ; here is the marriage chamber of the Lamb ; this is that heavenly Jerusalem where

Our lady sings *magnificat*
With tones surpassing sweet ;
And all the virgins bear their part,
Sitting round her feet.

Because you were God's instrument that brought me this great work, because your voice called me to this leadership in this wonderful movement toward the higher life. Therefore Dear and Reverend Mother, I desire to dedicate these meditations to you, and whatever comes of their sale beyond the cost of printing, I wish to go to the chapel fund of St. Gabriel's. I have written the meditations somewhat in full, hoping thus to aid beginners in the mastery of the art. I send them out, Dear and Reverend Mother, under your pious patronage, hoping that your prayers and the prayers of all the Sisters may make up for

what is lacking in them. Pray that the word of God here presented may have free course and abound, and that from these points of outlook our eyes may see the glory of the coming of the Lord, and in that glory we may rejoice, in that coming find salvation.

Commending not only my book, but my soul to your prayers, I am, and trust ever to be,
Your servant in Christ Jesus,

ALGERNON S. CRAPSEY.

ST. ANDREW'S RECTORY,
ROCHESTER,
Eve of St. Andrew, 1888.

Meditation I.

THE ANNUNCIATION.

SCENE.—The City of Nazareth, the Closet of St. Mary.

THE MYSTERY OF THE DIVINE CALL.

First Consideration—The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

Second Consideration—The callings are different, but every call is to perfection.

Third Consideration—The preparation for the call is in secret.

Fourth Consideration—The call is received with hesitation.

Fifth Consideration—The call must be accepted with entire submission.

Affection—Faith.

Resolution—To make daily an act of Faith.

SCENE.—It was evening in the little city of Nazareth. The snows of Lebanon glowed warm in the light of the setting sun. The shadows grew every moment longer and deeper as they moved silently across the valley of Jezreel. From the fifteen hills that stand round about Nazareth as the Lord stands round about His people, came the last sounds of departing day. There was a bleating of sheep as flock after flock came from the watering and passed under the rod into the fold. There was a noise of wings among the fir trees, where the birds build their nests. There was the sound of the grunting of camels as the caravan with its weary beasts and still more weary men came round the hills, along the *Via Maris* bearing the riches of the Indus to the West. The gates of the city were open and through them came these wayfaring men to tarry for a night. The streets of the city were full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof and here and there an old man with his staff in his hand for very age. Quickly the light passed away—no lingering twilight between the day and the night,

but suddenly darkness covered the earth and gross darkness the people. By and by the roofs were deserted and the doors were shut. Now nothing was heard but the moving of the leaves as the wind stirred the branches, a cry of some night bird from the hill and a rustle of insects in the grass. In this time of holy calm the spirit of the Lord moved upon the face of the waters of human life bringing in the eighth day of Creation. A pious maiden had entered into her closet and shut to her door and was praying to her Father in secret, and as she prayed she had an open vision. The room wherein she was kneeling was filled with light and she saw the appearance of an angel. He was decked with light as with a garment : he was clothed with majesty and honour. He came in unto her and said, Hail highly favored, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women ; and she was troubled at his saying and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be ; and the angel said unto her fear not Mary for thou has found favor with God ; and behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bring forth a son

and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great and shalt be called the Son of the Highest ; and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David. Then said Mary how shall this be seeing I know not a man. And the angel answered and said unto her, the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee, therefore that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. For with God nothing shall be impossible. And Mary said, behold the hand maid of the Lord be it unto me according to thy word and the angel departed from her. The light died out of her chamber, the heavenly presence passed away. The maiden looked, and behold she saw the same stars shining in the heavens, the night air was moving the leaves as before, the same bird was singing on the hill and the insects were stirring in the grass. All was apparently the same and yet all was changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye that change had taken place. While the angel was departing from her Mary conceived in her womb. The incarnation of the Son of God

was an accomplished fact. The promise of God made unto the fathers, unto which promise the twelve tribes constantly serving God day and night, had hoped to come, was in that moment fulfilled. Then the Word was made flesh and was tabernacled in us. It was as yet a secret between the angel and the virgin, but a secret soon to be revealed. For a little while men should not see Him, but in a little while they should see Him and behold His glory as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. In this scene the Blessed Virgin is the central figure. The angel comes to call her to that work whereunto she was appointed. And she hears with trembling that it is her vocation to be the mother of the Lord's Christ. She is that virgin which shall conceive, that woman which shall compass a man. And what shall she do in the day thereof? She shall do nothing but finish the prayer which the angel's coming had broken off, then lay her down and sleep and take her rest, knowing that the Lord only can make her dwell in safety.

FIRST CONSIDERATION.—This scene sets before the understanding the nature and process of the Divine Call. The gifts and callings of God are without repentance. Once made they fix the destiny of the called to a thousand generations. These callings are as many and as various as the infinitely varied thoughts of God himself. He calls the grass to grow upon the mountain and herb for the use of men; He calls the fish to swim in the waters and fowl to fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven; He calls the wild ass to the wilderness and the ox to the stall; He calls man from the dust and breathes in his nostrils the breath of life. Among men he calls some apostles and evangelists; some prophets and teachers. These callings are all made according to the determinate counsel of God after the good pleasure of His will. By them the moon knows her season, the sun his going down. They are fate. The mystery of the Divine Call must ever trouble the thoughts of the heart. Why God should make some vessels to honor and some to dis-

honor passes the ken of mortals. Why one man should be born in that good land where the yellow waters of the Tiber wash the walls of Rome, and another in that dreary region where the Yukon runs cold to the sea ; why one should live in that favored part of earth where the gospel of Christ is, in a measure, truly preached, truly received and truly followed ; while his brother and his sister just as dear to God, must dwell in heathen lands afar, where thick darkness broodeth ; why one should be quick of understanding in the way of the Lord and another learn with difficulty, these things which make men to differ, are the hard sayings of Destiny. We are forever tempted to ask who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind ? The greatest of human intellects have employed themselves in the solution of this problem. St. Augustine and Charles Darwin each made it the study of his life. The one finding the reason for these differences in the will of God, the other in the gropings of Nature.

SECOND CONSIDERATION.—The devout soul accepts these calls as from God, leaving

science to settle whether made by the slow method of evolution or daily acts of creation, and finds consolation for all hardship in the fact that each creature is called to its own perfection. The grass must be green upon the mountain, the herb meet for the use of man. The mighty hand and the stretched out arm are seen everywhere, in the deep that lieth under where Leviathan takes his pastime and in the heights above where the eagle stirreth up her nest. The couchant lion is the symbol of Judah's strength ; the plodding ass of Issachar's patience ; there is perfection of weakness as well as of strength ; the babe is as perfect as the man. If St. Paul speaks of the perfect man in Christ Jesus, Socrates shows us the perfect man out of Christ Jesus, not the perfection of Christian faith and charity, but the perfection of heathen truthfulness and fortitude. To every creature comes the same word of exhortation, Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect. God calls each one to his place and commands him to be perfect in that place. With each kind good the

whole of Creation is very good. The nature of the Divine Call is not only to fix but to direct ; not to stop the progress but to shape the course. Having grasped this truth the understanding ceases to ask who hath sinned this man or his parents that he was born blind, but looks to see the glory of God shown forth in him.

THIRD CONSIDERATION.—The joyful Mystery of Annunciation reveals not only the nature but also the process of the Divine Call.

The preparation for that Call is always in secret. None can know how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child. There in the secret recesses of nature the human life is shaped to its destiny. None can tell whether it will be light or dark ; whether it will be man or woman. The seed is planted in darkness that the flower may bloom in the light. The Blessed Virgin was not born in the purple. There was no sign about her to show that she was to be mother of the Great King. To her, as to all, the Kingdom of God, came without

observation. She lived secluded even more than is common with women. Until the time of her virginity she was kept in the hidden chambers of the Temple. There, like some violet hiding in the grass, she grew in the grace of God, and then she was espoused to a man named Joseph, a man of lowly life and work, and in his house she hid herself again. The city where she lived was the least of all cities, a city despised and rejected of men, and she herself knew not for what she was preparing. When the angel came she was troubled at his saying. It was so new, so strange, so intolerable a thought with her that she was to be the mother of the Christ that she could not receive it. The world about him is not only ignorant for what a man is making ready ; he does not know himself ; his own soul is not in the secret. He is ever in doubt as to the Divine intention, and the cry from darkened eyes everywhere is, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do ?" Even when the calling is assured one often fails to see the connection between it and the preparation. The novelist Dickens could never think

of his younger days with patience. It seemed to him cruel that a lad of so delicate organization and so high promise should be made the drudge of a blacking warehouse and have to run errands from the gaol. He could never, in the days of his fame and fortune, forgive the ignominy of those earlier years. He was never able to see that he owed all he was and all he had to that very distress. While pasting his labels and dodging in and out of the doors of the Marshalsea he was in training for his calling in life. Then he was schooled in the ways of London's waifs and strays and became the master delineator of their life and manners, so that he will be remembered in his line with his land's language. But he himself was never able to fathom the secret of his preparation. To every man as well as to the disciples in the upper room the Lord is saying : What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.

FOURTH CONSIDERATION.—The Divine Call thus prepared for in secret is received with hesitation. Its strangeness and great-

ness causes doubt. Whatever is great in life comes upon us unawares. It seems to Mephibosheth impossible that he should eat at the King's table. What is thy servant that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am. This self distrust is the characteristic mark of the truly called. The shrinking back ; the natural question, how can this be seeing I am what I am. Only the uncalled go skipping into the various vocations of life. The priest who comprehends that upon his sympathy and discretion may depend the eternal welfare of a soul will consider long before he will open his ear to the penitent. The physician who knows that his skill or ignorance means life or death to his patient may well pause on the threshold of the sick chamber, and the lawyer who feels that on his lips, hang the honor, and it may be the life of his client may well begin his pleading with a beating heart. Fear is in the heart of the hero as well as in the heart of the coward—and the hero because he is a hero is the more afraid. What makes him a hero is not the absence of fear, but the pres-

ence of a courage and a faithfulness which overcome fear.

FIFTH CONSIDERATION.—The third step in the process of the Divine Call is complete submission to the conditions of the call. Having heard the call, and followed it, there must be no further turning back. No haggling or bargaining, but an entire self surrender to the chosen vocation. Whatsoever it involves of labor, and of loss, and every vocation does involve labor and loss ; must be accepted in all their fullness. Whatever of pain and shame comes with the birth of Jesus, that pain and shame the Virgin must bear. Napoleon said to Metternich. What are three hundred thousand men to me, and saying so he spoke as a true soldier. To be careless of life is a condition of the soldiers calling. It is his vocation to gain victories be the slaughter what it may. The first commander of the army of the Potomac thought mainly of saving his own men, and saw them perish uselessly on many disastrous fields, the last commander of the same army gave his attention to beating the enemy and

though his losses were heavy, yet they were never useless ; in the end he saved both his army and his country. If a man is afraid to kill and be killed he must not be a soldier ; if a judge is afraid to decide he must not be a judge ; if a physician fears the fever he must give over his profession and a priest who will not risk his purity must never undertake the cure of souls. Any attempt to evade the conditions of our calling is followed by punishment swift as the death of Ananias. Who would fain follow in the way of Christian renunciation and yet keep back part of the price of the land. We can lie to the world and to ourselves, but not to the Holy Ghost. We can cheat the markets but not the universe. Only as we accept the conditions of our calling shall we have its full glory and reward. The Blessed Virgin surrendered herself entirely to the will of God. That surrender put to the hazard her fame and her life. She came under the suspicion of her husband and was liable to the scorn of the world. She was not afraid to trust God with all that was dear to her womanhood, and

because she was thus submissive she sits in the high places of the earth and all generations call her blessed.

Now, O My Soul—the understanding has given thee knowledge of the nature and process of the Divine Calling. Its nature is to give thee thy room in the house of thy Father : its process to lead thee through secret ways and through much distress from strength to strength until with the God of Gods thou appearest with every saint in Zion.

THE AFFECTION.—Which this meditation should cause to arise in thee is the affection of faith. Thou shouldest desire to believe. Thou shouldest love to think that there is nothing impossible with God. He is over all God blessed forever. At His word the stormy wind ariseth, and at His rebuke there is a great calm. The World thinks that every man is of the earth earthy, but do thou cleave to this one as the Lord from heaven. It is easy to see that men fall in the slime pits of Sodom, but do thou lift up thine eyes and see the Lord bringing back His own as he did sometime from the deep of the sea. Love to

believe more and more of the goodness and the love and the power of God. Do not forever with veiled lids seek for thy Jesus in the dust, but look up and thou shalt see thy Jesus, and all his saints riding upon white horses. When doubts assail thee and inward persecutions afflict thee then look up steadfastly into heaven and thou shalt see the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. Love to believe as Mary believed and then thou shalt also be able to sing Magnificat. Thou needest not so much a faithful love as a loving faith.

RESOLVE.—As the results of this meditation to say Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief. Make an act of Faith every day. Saying I fully accept all that God has revealed, and the church teaches, this is that Faith in which I live and in which I hope to die. This is my rest. Here will I dwell for I have a delight therein.

Meditation II.

THE VISITATION.

SCENE—The Hill County of Judah and the House of Elizabeth.

THE MYSTERY OF BEGINNING.

First Consideration—Beginnings are in loneliness.

Second Consideration—Beginnings are in dependence.

Third Consideration—Beginnings command sympathy.

Fourth Consideration—Beginnings are in fear and joy.

Fifth Consideration—In this world the spiritual life begins.

Affection, hope.

Resolution to go forward daily.

SCENE.—In one of the cities of the Hill Country of Judah an aged woman was secluded in the midst of her house. In her retirement she was rejoicing in the loving kindness of the Lord who had taken away her reproach among men. Though she was past age the Lord had given her hope that she should bear a son and this was the fifth month of her that was called barren. As she meditated she thought of the days of her youth when she prayed and waited for that which never came. She thought of the prime of her womanhood when she became calmly resigned to the fact that she should never be a mother in Israel, that no child should even rise up to call her blessed. In those days she was sore afflicted. She was a reproach unto her neighbors. They said that for her secret sins she was cursed of God with barrenness.

But she held her peace and sinned not with her lips, but said in her heart it is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good. And now her enemies were confounded. They wondered at the gift of God which was bestowed upon her ; they marvelled that she

should in her age receive the blessing of youth. It seemed that for her God had kept the good wine of life until the end of the feast. By His decree she had taken her place in that line of Hebrew women whose sons born out of due time, had been the glory of Israel. With Sarah she laughed for her Isaac was coming to the birth. With Rachel she rejoiced in the increase of love because of her Joseph saying, now will the people love me. With Hannah she vowed the fruit of her womb to the Lord because it came from the Lord.

But greater than the men of old was the child of her bearing because he was the sum of them all. He was the more than a prophet. He was the end of the law and the beginning of grace. Therefore he was called John, which means grace. Seeing that he was the messenger going before the King of Grace to prepare His way. These things were not yet revealed to the woman in all their fullness, but she knew enough to be glad and rejoice in the mercy that was coming to the people of God.

As she thus mused the fire kindled. A spark of kindred heat fell upon the tow of her meditation and set her heart aflame. Her secret thought had answer from without. She heard a knocking and she went and opened the door and before it stood a maiden soiled with the dust and wearied with the length of her journey. She had come from the City of Nazareth in Gallilee. She had saluted no man by the way. She had entered into no city for rest. She had come with haste that from this woman before whose house she stood she might receive the confirmation of her hopes. Thus by mutual attraction Elizabeth and Mary were brought face to face. Each with eyes full of wonder. If Elizabeth had conceived after time Mary had conceived before time. These conceptions were not of time, but of eternity. Not of nature but of grace, and each woman sought from the other that assurance which comes of a common experience. The elder woman bowed before the younger and she said what is this that the mother of My Lord is come unto me. And Mary said my Soul doth magnify the Lord

and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

FIRST CONSIDERATION.—The Joyful Mystery of the Visitation which this scene presents to the understanding, is the mystery of beginnings. All beginnings are in loneliness. God was alone in the beginning of the world. Then when the world came forth at the call of God, it was alone at the first. It was without form and void. It could not be seen nor heard and there was darkness upon the face of its waters. It was a dark thing moving through darkness and there was no light to see it by. And this mystery of beginnings is a continuing mystery. The everlasting day of Creation is from the evening until the morning. From the evening darkness of not being to the morning light of being. Every day a new life sets itself off from the sum of life ; a new consciousness rises out of the unconscious ; new worlds are forming from the nebulæ of worlds ; new streams rising in the desert. The first thing necessary to this new life is that it shall separate itself ; build for itself dividing walls.

to house its spirit against the intrusion of all other spirits, and this separation is most decided in the beginning of life. The hard shell shuts the young bird in. Before it can fly with other birds it must grow its own wings. All sight and sound are bred in darkness and silence.

The new life in Christ Jesus was subject to this condition of loneliness. His incarnation by causing His mother to be blessed above all women, separated her from them. Her exaltation lifted her above the plane of common life into the lonely heights of blessedness. Then was no one with whom she could take counsel. The secret life that was in her sealed her lips. It was not yet an articulate life able to speak for itself and she could not speak for it. It is impossible to explain a life beforehand or give excuse for it. It must explain or excuse itself. So Mary was dumb in the presence of suspicion, and it was this loneliness that drove her to the hill country of Judah, to the house of Elizabeth, which was the only place in all the world where she could look for sympathy

and companionship. And the son of Mary inherited this loneliness. By his sinlessness He was separated from His brethren. He was the House of the Lord established in the top of the mountains. It is the highest peaks which are the most barren. As one of our own poets hath said :

“ He who ascends to mountain tops ”
Will find the loftiest peaks most wrapt in clouds and
snow.

He who surpasses or subdues mankind
Must look down on the hate of those below,
Though far beneath the earth and ocean spread
“ And far above the Sun of Glory glow.
Round him are icy rock, and loudly blow
Contending tempests on his naked head
And thus reward the toils that to these summits lead.”

The Lord was alone in His perfect holiness as the snows of the mountain are alone in their stainless purity. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. He was the light shining in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not. He was called upon to tread the wine press alone, and of the people there was none with Him. He was alone in the agony of the Garden ; alone in the death on the Cross. All great

life seeks to hide itself that it may work in secret. No one knows the saints until they are dead. A holy life is a separate life. Close to God is far from the world. The call to the saints is a call to depart. Get thee out from thy land and thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee of. Go three days' journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the Lord your God. Come ye apart unto a desert place and rest awhile. The call is from *Ur* of the Chaldees to the wanderings of Canaan; from the flesh pots of Egypt to the barrenness of Sinai; from the companionship of the upper room to the loneliness of Calvary.

SECOND CONSIDERATION. — The new life is not only lonely, it is also dependent. It has about it the color of selfishness. The cry of the child never spares the mother. The nestling does not hesitate to take the last morsel from the maw that feeds it. It is an universal order that the elder shall serve the younger. But that which appears to be selfishness in the beginning is not selfishness, it is dependence. It is consciousness of life

the call of the helpless for help. It is this cry of the unborn to be born, of the born to live, that fills the earth with its vast ministrations of love. Because of it the foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests. In answer to it men toil and women travail. Nature gathers all her forces to protect the beginnings of life. Her strongest love is maternal. When the Lord Christ came He entered into nature. He subjected himself to this condition of dependence and reposed without a fear on the bosom of his mother. And His religion is not a religion of force, but of dependence. It is the Wisdom that stands in the street and cries. It calls to human hearts for shelter ; it stands at the door and knocks. This is that wonderful mystery of visitation. God does not force the will to serve Him, but He visits the heart with salvation. He comes as the new born child, rescuing us from ourselves by the importunate demands of His love. He asks to be born in us and to be nourished by us. He appeals to us for compassion, saying, Is it nothing to you ? All ye that pass by behold and see if

there is any sorrow like unto my sorrow. The infant is not more dependent on the love of its mother than is the Lord Jesus on the love of his people. In this world He has nothing but what they give Him. In the days of his flesh holy woman ministered to Him of their substance, and now his name is kept alive on the earth by the loving ministrations of his people. Cold hearts chill Him ; hard hearts kill Him. There are many sepulchres of Joseph in human hearts where the dead Christ lies buried, betrayed to death by the familiar friends in whom he trusted.

THIRD CONSIDERATION. — Life would indeed be a misery if loneliness and dependence were its only conditions. But these call for and find almost instant relief in sympathy. Mary may be alone and forlorn in Gallilee, but in the hill country of Judah there is one who can feel for and with her. Every life is born not only after but into its kind. It does not come into a land of strangers, but into its own land. It is waited for. Kinfolk and neighbors rejoice at its birth. The fact of kinship takes away the sting from the fact of

dependence. It is no disgrace for the child to receive from the parent. The great Son of God hath nothing but what He hath received from the Father. And in the sympathy of kindred life there is refuge from loneliness.

As soon as a life comes into being it is drawn irresistibly into the fellowship of lives like unto itself. This great word *Sympathos*, like feeling for like, explains the universe. Every particle of matter attracts every other particle, according to known law. The cry is earth to earth, dust to dust, and ashes to ashes. By this principle the movements of the heavens are regulated. It is the sympathy of star dust for star dust that makes the union of the worlds. It is sympathy which causes the swallows to build their nests together under the eaves, and the cattle to herd on the hillside. If they have no shepherd the sheep will fold themselves. The unity of the flock arises from the likeness of the sheep, and this unity is natural. No amount of ingenuity can even make

the wolf lie down with the lamb, the leopard with the kid.

Sympathy is the medium by which life makes itself known to life. The old life renews itself in the young, the young finds itself in the old. A man does not know himself until he has spoken to his fellow man. When deep calls unto deep then there is a noise of water pipes. When the new life in Mary salutes the older life of the same order in Elizabeth, then there is a leaping of babes. John leaps toward the Lord Jesus, drawn by irresistible power of attraction. In the Kingdom of God the law of attraction reaches its perfect development.

The Church of God is nothing else than a communion of saints ; a society of like minded. A common nature is the bond of the body, and unity is secured by inward principle rather than by outward enactment. The sheep and the goats may mingle, but they can never mix. The good and bad fish may be drawn into the same net, but will never be served on the same table. The wheat and the tares grow up together,

but the one for burning, the other for garnering. Sympathy is a principle of repulsion as well as of attraction. It drives Mary from Nazareth as well as to Judah. And all the turmoil of the world and the church is simply the effort of unlikes to get away from each other. It is Michael and his angels casting out the devil and his angels. So there is an essential unity of the church which can never be destroyed. As long as there are hearts that love the Lord Jesus Christ, so long will there be a church at unity with itself. For Christ shall be known in His saints. It was not their love for each other so much as their common love for their Lord which caused Elizabeth and Mary to be of one mind in a house. And in the generous sympathy of the older woman the younger found relief from her fears and assurance of her joys.

FOURTH CONSIDERATION.—For all beginnings are in fear and joy. There is fear of the unknown. The new life does not know which way to go, nor what to trust in. Everything frightens the child at first. It is

afraid of the light and afraid of the dark. Each new face startles it. And the soul new born to God cries, I heard thy speech and was afraid. Depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

But fear at the beginning is not so great as joy. The first draught of life is always the sweetest. The corn makes the young men cheerful and new wine the maids. It is young feet that beat the earth with most assurance. The young are afraid of many things but they are not afraid of death. Every life has in itself the promise of its own immortality. Once born, forever born. The life given can never be taken away. To the young death is only a sound and a sight—not a reality. The Valley and the Shadow lie far away; they never look to come to them. And to the joy of living is joined the delight of freshness. There is the constant excitement of discovery. The world will always be a new world to new generations. It is only after many years and much disappointment that Caius Cassius is weary of the world. When Mary sings *Magnificat*

she cannot think of the piercing sword. Young converts are always the most sanguine. To them it is enough that they are converted. At the beginning they are already at the end. They do not suspect the weariness of the journey.

The good God gives the morning brightness for encouragement as well as the evening calm for reward. A tired man will hardly set forth on a pilgrimage. Morning clouds keep the traveller at home. A joyless beginning is as unnatural as a joyful end. The Star of Bethlehem shines on Jesus' birth; the three hours' darkness shroud His death. In the day when the Lord God created the heavens and the earth the morning stars together sang to welcome their creation. In heaven also beginnings bring joy. There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance. God rests in life assured ; He joys in life begun. A good man is calm. A good boy is joyful. This is the mystery of beginning. Every life begins in loneliness ; enters

upon dependence ; commands sympathy; has about it the fear of strangeness, and is full of the joy of living.

FIFTH CONSIDERATION.—And this mystery explains the history of the saints of God. We cannot read that history without a feeling of despair. The holiness of the saints cost them more than we care to pay. They are so lonely, their cry is the cry of Elijah, And I am left alone and they seek my life. And their dependence on God is extreme. The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head. They have indeed sympathy, but it is the sympathy of the few not of the many. It is Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephuneh with their good report, against not only the ten spies with evil report, but against the twelve tribes of Israel. The saints are so fearful also. Their cry one to another is Work out your own Salvation with fear and trembling. Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear. Their faces do indeed shine with holy light when they come down from the Mount of

God but the world does not see nor comprehend that light. Here they are destitute, afflicted, tormented and we esteem them smitten of God. Far from regarding them with favor, He seems to vex them with His sore displeasure.

The lot of the man of this world seems altogether the happier. He is not lonely for the world is full of people like himself. He is not dependent for the strength of the earth ministers to him. When we see the man of the world in his purple and fine linen and the man of God in camels hair and leathern girdle we are apt to cry, the ways of God are not equal. The one has all the work the other all the reward. But we must remember that the man of God is just entering on his life while the man of the world is at the end of his. We are comparing the infancy of the one with the full manhood of the other. When the man of this world was in the womb he was just as lonely when first born just as weak and fearful as the saint of God is now. If we would judge rightly of the two lives we must compare beginnings with

beginnings and we shall find that the ways of God are equal. That there is one law for the son born in the house and one for the stranger that cometh into the land. Nature and Grace are not contradictory they are different phases of the same system.

If the soul then have these marks upon it, if it be lonely and dependent, if it hath a heart of sympathy for Jesus crucified, if it goes fearfully because it knows not the way and at the same time has that assurance, that St. Andrew had when he said joyfully to his brother Simon we have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, if these marks be upon him then hath he the tokens of God's favor, then is he clothed with that coat of many colors which Jacob made for his son Joseph because he loved him. And dipping that coat in the blood of the Lamb he can hold it up before God and cry "tell us whether this be thy son's coat or no" being sure of the answer. "It is my son's coat."

THE AFFECTION—Which this meditation demands of the soul is the affection of hope. Love to look upward and look onward. The

pathway up the mountain side does not go on forever it comes at last to the top. Disappointment is the highway to fruition. The green fruit comes between the blossom and the ripeness. If in this life only we have hope we are of all creatures most miserable. If we did not see before us the holy mount burning with fire we should not care to go forward. If we had everything we should want nothing. No state of life is so intolerable as a state of satiety. Love to hope for all things good and fair, that thy life may be crowned with promise, for go onward as thou wilt the good and fair shall ever be beyond thee in the infinite reaches of the infinite nature of God.

AND RESOLVED—To go forward. Let each day mark thy progress. Never say here, but there. Lift up thine eyes and see the height of Moriah in the distance and say to the young men let us go and worship God yonder.

Meditation III.

THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR
JESUS CHRIST.

SCENE.—Bethlehem, the cave and the field.

Mystery—The mystery of an accomplished fact.

First Consideration—Life limited by calling.

Second Consideration—Life unlimited in relation.

Third Consideration—Limitation the result of previous choice.

Fourth Consideration—Every calling irksome.

Fifth Consideration—Every calling has its own joy.

Affection—Charity.

Resolution—To seek daily the love of God.

SCENE.—It was at the close of a winter day when two travelers, a man and a woman, entered the fields of Bethlehem. They rejoiced to see the City of David stretching along the limestone ridge, and even the tower of Herod frowning from the heights was a welcome sight, for it was the end of their journey. They had come from far-off Galilee and were sadly in need of rest and shelter, not only because they were weary, but more because the woman's full time was come that she should bring forth her first born. They made haste to pass the short distance that was between them and the city gates that they might not be overtaken by darkness without the walls. As they passed along they could not but admire the beauty and remember the renown of the city. The corn fields and the olive gardens spread their richness on either hand, and the vineyards ran in terraced stairways up to the walls of Bethlehem. They could see the hills of Judah rising one above another in the farther distance, and before them was the road leading to Jerusalem.

They were of the house and lineage of David, and they remembered that this was the city where David dwelt. This was that Bethlehem, that house of bread, to which Ruth and Naomi came from the fields of Moab after the famine, and now these children of Ruth and of David were coming back after years of exile to fulfill the commands of their earthly and their heavenly King, and to give to the city by their coming an undying celebrity. The heart is full when the eyes are lifted for the first time, or after long absence to places beautiful in themselves and beautiful in their memories. But this man and woman could hardly pause to enjoy the one or think of the other. It was necessary that they should reach the city without delay.

As soon as they came within the gates the man left the woman with the ass standing in the street while he went to find a place of refuge. He came to the Kahn, but the courtyard was full of camels and asses and a crowd of men going to and fro feeding their beasts and preparing their own supper. The man

looked over the motley, noisy throng and saw at once that there was no room for them in the inn. He returned sadly to the woman, and there, standing like the Levite of old in the streets of Gibeon of Benjamin, he waited for some one to take him in. But no one came. The city was full of strangers and every householder had his own friends to care for, and these two were left to stand without while the night came down upon them. The man went up and down seeking a place of shelter, and at last he found a cave in the hillside. It was a stable for cattle. The beasts were in their stalls eating from their mangers. There was room here and so the man brought the woman and made for her a bed of straw in an empty stall, and having done all they could they waited for the birth. In the city first the children then the men and women went to bed, and while these watched the city slept. It was such a night as had for ten thousand years rested upon the heights of Bethlehem, and had this man stood in the door of the cave as Elijah stood in the door of the cave at Horeb, he would

have seen no special sign of God's presence. The sky was clear and every star was shining. In that upper region there was clearness, coldness and beauty, but no love. It was nothing to the stars in their serenity that a woman was travelling in pain on the earth. A new and wonderful life was just coming into the world. But all down the hillsides were sepulchres in every garden which prophesied that this one, too, must die. All this vast silence of earth and sky is typical of the life of man which cometh out of the silence to go into the silence again. At the foot of the hill there were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night as they had watched since the days when David followed the ewes great with young. To them, as to him, the word of God was revealed. For the silence of the night was broken. The angel of the Lord stood by them and the glory of the Lord shone round about them and they were sore afraid. But the angel said unto them fear not, for unto you is born this day, in the City of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord,

and this shall be a sign unto you, You shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger ; and they came and found Mary and the babe lying in a manger, and when they had worshipped the holy Child they left Him with His mother. She took Him and laid Him to her bosom and found her calling in administering to his necessities.

FIRST CONSIDERATION.—This scene of the nativity so familiar to the devout imagination presents to the understanding the mystery of an accomplished fact. The Son of God is born into the world. Every fact or thing done, when it is done, takes its place in the universe and compels recognition. It, in its degree, limits every other fact. It changes times and seasons, and everything must adjust itself to this new condition.

Mary can no longer doubt. Her calling and election is sure. It is not now a question of what she may do, but of what she must do. The little hand that lies so lightly upon her bosom is the iron hand

of fate. It, for all it is so light, has the mighty weight of compulsion forcing her into a certain line of duty. From this time forth she must live not for herself, but for her Child Jesus. Not her pleasure but His necessities must shape her course. What she might have been, a prophetess under the palm tree, a pilgrim to far countries, the mother of many children, all that is past and she must be content with what she is, the Virgin Mother of the Lord's Christ. This is that law of limitation which is a condition of every calling. Every life, as it is called, passes from the indefinite to the definite; from the nebulous region of infinite possibilities into the clearly marked estate of one fixed fact.

Life's openings are countless as the stars of heaven and like the sands upon the seashore innumerable. The youth looks and sees a hundred roads running in an hundred different directions, his imaginations covers them all; his feet can follow but one of them. A maiden in the pride and beauty of her maidenhood is every man's admiration, but in

the days of her wifehood she is only one man's love ; she passes from admirations to admiration ; she loses the many to gain the one. This limit which we may not pass frets our life. The vast and the vague possibilities float up and down like motes in a sunbeam ; they are nothing in themselves, but they spoil the light. The scholar in his closet will read of the field of battle and will repine because he handles the pen rather than the sword. The farmer behind the plow looks to the smoke of the city and turns sadly in the furrow as he thinks of the merchant in the pursuit of his gains and says so might I have been had I chosen differently. The mother, surrounded by her children, sees the holy sister passing free from care, and sighs as she thinks of the ties that bind her. The very world, as it makes its monotonous journey round the sun, must sometimes wish to break away and find new pathways in and out among the stars. Everything is both infinite and finite ; limited and unlimited ; infinite in possibility, finite in reality ; unlimited in idea, limited in fact. And it is the infinite

rebellling against the finite ; the unlimited chafing within its limits that makes much of the unrest of life. The very dust of earth creeps upward through the trunk and branches of the trees and out to the edges of the leaves to escape the narrowness of its environment. But the law of limit is the necessary law of Creation. Each can only be one thing—not everything. God Himself (if we may reverently speak so of Him), is limited by His Creation. When He created man, then the will of man resisted God. There are now two wills in the world—God’s and mine. This mystery of limitation is the mystery of the incarnation. The Son of God was born of one woman, in one place and time. He was an Hebrew of the Hebrews, of the tribe of Judah and of the house of David. He was born in the middle and waste of the years of human life ; in the days when Augustus was Emperor of the Romans and Herod King of the Jews. His birth fixed the conditions of His life and the manner of His death. He taught as an Oriental scribe by parable and dark speech, and He died as a Roman

malefactor, the cruel death of the cross. His own coming changed all this. After Him the scribe ceased and the cross disappeared, but He Himself suffered the gainsayings of the one and the pains of the other. Because He entered into the world He was subject to its limitations. This prophet, mighty in word and deed, was after all only Jesus of Nazareth ; willing to live the life and die the death of man.

SECOND CONSIDERATION.—But a life, while thus limited by its calling, is unlimited in its relations. Each fraction is a part of the whole and must be taken with the whole if we would comprehend it. The sun is one thing in one place, but its light radiates through the solar heavens and enlightens all the worlds. The scholar cannot be the soldier, but he can and does furnish the soldier with the knowledge of warfare. Roger Bacon, in his cell, drives the mailed knight from the field and renders useless the moat, the drawbridge and the wall. This man who never saw a battle, changed all the methods of war. It is the wheat which

the farmer gathers that goes to the farthest east and is sold for spicery and silk. His lonely life in the country sustains that intense and varied life of the city.

The Lord Jesus lived in the Holy Land ever so long ago, but to-day He is Christ in us the hope of glory. He lived once and He died once, but by so doing He brought Himself into relation to all things living and dying. Of the living, it is said, ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God ; of the dead they shall hear the voice of the Son of Man and live. And this fact of unlimited relationship satisfies the craving for the infinite. If man cannot be God he can at least pray to God. If he cannot be one with Him in nature he can be one with Him in love.

THIRD CONSIDERATION.—The limit and relationship of a man's life is in a great measure fixed by his own choice. It is true that God calls, but man makes that calling his own by accepting it. That Mary was a woman was a thing entirely outside her own will. But she by her purity and by her

seeking made herself meet for the grace of God, and when God called she was ready, saying : Behold the handmaid of the Lord be it unto me according to thy word.

It was because it was the habit of her life to choose the good and reject the evil that she was able to make choice of the highest good when it came. It is this power of choice that makes man to be as God. He shares with God in the ordering of the universe. If free will be not apparent, but real then a man's choice is able to change times and seasons. He can within the limits of his power make the world over. He can suspend one natural law by the intervention of another. He can create no new material, but he can change from one form to another and make the elements serve his will. These considerations make the vast importance of his choice immediately apparent. He is responsible for the exercise of his will to a higher will. If he choose contrary to that will there is conflict. It is man's wrong choices that are the evil of the world. Everything has its season and proportion and to choose out of season

and proportion is to pervert the way of God. Man would have knowledge of evil. And instead of waiting to know evil as the opposite of good, he chose to know evil as the substitute of good instead of waiting to see evil by its effects in others, he chose to experience those effects in himself. He will have not the experience of the physician, but the experience of the sick man. And that choice shut against him the gates of Paradise.

And a man's choice is final. After the will acts it cannot undo the action. When Mary said behold the hand maid of the Lord be it unto me according to thy word, then she surrendered herself and the power of the highest overshadowed her and she became the mother of the Lord's Christ. Before Ananias decided to sell the land and lay the price at the Apostle's feet it was in his own power. Afterward it was death to keep back part of the price. Before the tree falls, it may fall toward any point of the compass, but if the tree fall toward the north or toward the south, in the place where the tree falleth there it shall be. It is the nature and finality of

man's choice which makes him a moral being. If his actions were nothing in themselves and had no consequences, then there would be no such thing as right and wrong. It is because man's will is real, real as the will of God, because he is a self determining being that he is accountable. He is the only creature on earth that can be wicked.

FOURTH CONSIDERATION.—Every calling of God is irksome. It is a call to duty and duty means some what to be done. When Mary accepted the high function of motherhood, the duties of her calling did not end they only commenced with the birth of the child Jesus. And no calling in life so completely sets forth the law of irksomeness as the calling of the mother. The care of children is a constant care. The mother, unless she shirk, cannot be free day nor night. The child is a burden which she may never lay aside. She must do for it a thousand little things which in themselves are most vexatious. So dress and to undress, to nourish the little body, and guide the infant soul, keeps the mother busy all the time, and the crying of

the child cannot but wear her nerves. She does indeed give her life for the life of the child. Many rebel against this irksomeness and ruin their lives in consequence. The maiden looks forward with eagerness to the day when she shall be a wife and a mother. She thinks of her husband and her children as so many joys. She does not consider that they are also so many duties; that she must wait on the call of her husband and answer the cry of her children. The Blessed Virgin had the care as well as the love of the child Jesus. Only a strong affection can carry the mother through the weariness of her daily life. Therefore, God gives to every mother a heart of love for her children, which never fails. She has a double portion of His spirit of charity.

The call of the Christian soul to holiness is like the call of motherhood in its irksomeness. The new life must be watched with anxious care, else it will die. He who would follow the Lord must first count the cost. Heaven is beautiful, but the way is

straight and the gate narrow. To watch and to pray every day, to struggle for the mastery with every evil will, to go up harnessed, to have the loins girded and the lights burning, to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ ; these in themselves are not pleasant, but grievous. St. Paul suffered much from terror and cold, when he was a day and a night in the deep. 'The yoke of Christ is easy and His burden is light, but it is a yoke and it is a burden ; and any yoke, however easy, which must be worn continually, chafes the neck, and any burden, though ever so light, in time tires the back. To be often weary of holiness is a sign of the holy. Those who never bear the burden never feel the weight.

FIFTH CONSIDERATION.—Every calling, however limited and irksome, has its own joys, and the joy is in the calling. The pilgrim has the pleasure of walking in the morning, the joy of resting in the evening, and these he would not have if he were not a pilgrim. That life is a failure which does not find its chief joy in its own calling. The

mother has her light of life from baby's eyes. The merchant finds the greatest delight in sending out his ships and receiving back his cargoes. He will keep on with his business long after the necessity for it has ceased, for it is a pleasure to him. Every call of God is to a work, and work is the outward sign of an inward life. And it is the living that is joyful. There may be little pleasure in a thing done, but there is intense enjoyment in a thing doing. The soldier enjoys the rush to death, for in that brief moment he feels the highest power of life that is in him. Men who work are contented while they work. It is only the idle who are fretful.

The understanding has now unfolded the mystery of the nativity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; which is the mystery of an accomplished fact; which fixes the limit and relations of life; which is the outcome of previous choice and lays upon the life a burden and gives it a pleasure.

THE AFFECTION of charity is demanded by this mystery. That overmastering love

which makes the weak strong, the fearful brave and the foolish wise. Not to love is not to live. Desire, then, O Christian soul, that charity, which is the one eternal thing. Faith and hope are the wings that bear the soul heavenward, but charity is the *soul* itself. Faith believes and hope looks forward, but charity enjoys. Faith must doubt and hope must wait, but charity passes through closed doors into the presence of God. To love God is to be with God.

RESOLVE to go out and seek the love of God, as a Knight of old went out to seek the love of a maiden. He had not seen, and he did not know her, but her fair image was in his heart, it was his nature to love her and he knew she must be somewhere. So seek after God, as yet thou hath not seen Him nor dost thou know Him as He is, but His holy image is in thine heart, it is of thy nature to love Him, and for thee He must be somewhere.

Meditation IV..

THE PRESENTATION OF OUR LORD AND
SAVIOUR IN THE TEMPLE.

SCENE.—The Temple at the time of morning sacrifice.

First Consideration—Every living thing grows after its kinds, into its work.

Second Consideration—Growth brings purification.

Third Consideration—Growth gives outlook.

Fourth Consideration—Growth is in obedience to law.

Affection—Holy obedience.

Resolution—To serve God in all things, great and small.

SCENE.—It was the time of the morning sacrifice. The whole burnt offering was burning on the brazen altar, and the smoke of the incense mingling with the smoke of the sacrifice went up as a sweet smell to the Lord of Hosts. The offering was the symbol of the life of his people, the incense of the prayers of His saints. The organ, the psaltery and the harp were filling the temple with melody, and the Levites, the singers, were crying, one to another, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts ; the whole earth is full of His glory. All the courts were filled with people who were waiting without at the time of incense. Standing at the head of the fifteen steps that lead from the court of the women to the court of Israel, pressing against the wicker gate, beholding and rejoicing in the grand ceremonial of worship, was a woman who had come, not only to take part in the general, but also to offer a special sacrifice. It was the day of her purification. She had brought her first born son to present Him before the Lord and to purify herself from His birth. The law demanded the child of her. Every

first born of Israel is holy to the Lord. If she would keep it she must redeem it. So she had paid five shekels of the sanctuary, the price of the child's redemption, into the treasury, and now she is waiting until the close of the general office that she may make her special offering and return to her own home. She had brought the offering of the poor, a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons. But she was not ashamed of her poverty, and as confidently expected her blessing as if she had brought the firstling of the flock, a lamb of a year old. In a little while the priest came and received her gift. He broke the neck of her sacrifice, poured the blood round about the base of the altar and laid away the flesh as the priest's portion. He pronounced the woman clean, gave her benediction and sent her back to her people. As she was returning, pressing her child to her bosom, glad that she had fulfilled for Him all the ordinances and commandments of the law, an old man met her and took the child from her, and holding Him in his arms began to bless and to prophesy. The old

man was an Israelite indeed ; he was just ; he feared God and he waited for the consolation of Israel. And it was promised him that he should not see death until he had seen the Lord's Christ. And as he held the child he prophesied and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou has prepared before all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles and to be the glory of thy people Israel. And Joseph and His mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of Him, and Simeon blessed them and said unto Mary, His mother, This child shall be set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be spoken against (yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. And Anna, a prophetess, of the tribe of Aser, a daughter of Phanuel, which departed not from the temple, but served God with prayers and fastings night and day. She coming in that instant likewise gave thanks unto God and spake of Him to all who looked for

redemption in Israel. Wondering at these words and pondering them in her heart the mother received her child again from the arms of the prophet and carried Him to her own home. The child was redeemed and she was purified ; and there was nothing else but to wait for the child to increase in wisdom, and in stature, and in favor with God and man, and to see what the Lord would have the child to do.

FIRST CONSIDERATION.—The presentation of our Lord and Saviour in the temple places before the understanding the three mysteries of increase ; of purification and of outlook. Every life is subject to the law of growth. It was said of Jesus “He must increase,” and this is true not only of Him, but of all who like Him have in them the breath of life. It is of the very essence of life to grow. Dead things, mere stocks and stones do not grow. They remain the same from year to year. The stock may rot and the stone crumble away, but they do not increase, they are not greater to-day than they were yesterday. But a living plant increases year

by year. It has within itself the power of making itself greater. The earth brings forth fruit of itself, "first the blade, and then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear." The process of growth is an unconscious process. It is not the choice of a man's will, it is a necessity of his nature. If he lives he must grow. He cannot by taking thought, add one cubit to his stature. But by breathing the air, eating the bread and drinking the water of life, he increases in stature without thought. The element of life which is in him takes hold of and assimilates the elements of life which are without him, and thus he adds to his weight and measure. All round about man are substances only waiting his vital touch to turn to life in him. And he has given him a mysterious power of selection, by which he is able to reject the evil and to choose the good. Here we find again that all pervading principle of sympathy. The phosphate desires phosphate, the acid, acid and the alkali, alkali, and these are chosen with unerring certainty. The law of growth governs not only the outward, but also the inward life. The

Lord Jesus increased not only in stature but in wisdom and in favor with God and man. His mind expanded and His heart unfolded, as the light of knowledge entered the one, and the heat of love inflamed the other. The new born child knows nothing, it has capacity to know everything. The wisest man has acquired his wisdom. He has grown into it. So love at the first is feeble ; it is only the instinct of self preservation. The child seeks the mother's breast because its a place of safety and fount of nourishment. But soon the child learns to love the mother, not for what she gives, but for what she is, and that love is the tenderest when the motherhood is only to memory, when the hair is gray and the step is feeble, then the love of the son sustains the mother. It is as natural for the heart to love as for the hair to grow.

When growth ceases then life ceases. The spent forces may for a time hold the organization, which the living power has built up, in balance, but it is only a question of time when the stationary life shall end in death. The stagnant pool dries quickly. The duration of

every life is measured by its capacity for growth. The little creatures in the waters are born and breath and die. They cannot grow and therefore they cannot live. The days of man are three score years and ten, through one score he increases in stature, through another score he adds to his breadth and weight, during the third score he holds his life in uncertain balance, and in the ten years that follow he falls away into the grave. They are years not of gain but of loss. And it is because his mind and his spirit have capacity of growth greater than his body, because his last days are mentally and spiritually, his best days that we may hope they are also his first days. As his capacity for intellectual and spiritual acquisition are not exhausted, we may conclude that he will live until he comes to the fullness of the stature of Christ. When his body ceases to grow, then his mind begins to grow, and we may trust that the death of his body is the life of his soul. That his spirit will then be pure spirit seeing not the appearances, but the reality of things.

Every creature must not only grow, but it must grow after its own manner. The law of its increase is given at creation, or birth. Every flower grows into its own color. The true beauty of life is the consequence of healthy growth. Consider the lilies of the field how they grow. They toil not, neither do they spin, and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. It is not the outward adornment of the body, the braiding of the hair and the putting on of costly apparel that gives grace to the countenance and dignity to the mien, but is is the hidden man of the heart. A beautiful soul makes a beautiful face. It is foolish to desire to look well and not to strive to live well. The secret thoughts of the heart grow out into the life. As is the seed so is the plant.

Growth not only changes the life ; it also changes its conditions. It is from stage to stage. A man soon outgrows his cradle. To grow is to change. The days of Mary's purification were ended ; it was no longer necessary for her to hide herself ; she had out-

grown her weakness. The Child Jesus was no longer so feeble that He could not bear the light ; He had grown strong enough to be presented in the temple and to be lifted up before the Lord. Growth is responsibility. When the tree grows so that it ought to bear fruit, it must bear fruit. Ignorance is not only a misfortune, it is a crime. What a man ought to know he must know. To love God is not a choice, it is a command. The heart must love Him because it can love Him. Thus every living thing must grow after its own kind and into its own work.

SECOND CONSIDERATION.—Growth demands and secures purification. The great processes of life are purifying. Cleanness is a demand of nature. It was not the priest who made S. Mary pure, it was the law of purity in her. When she came to the temple the days of her purification were ended. The priest only certified to a cleanness which was already her own. God, in nature, takes care of all natural impurities. The blood not only nourishes the tissues, it carries away the waste. By growth man overcomes his natural

imperfections. Out of weakness he is made strong.

But, alas, man's impurities are not only natural, they are acquired. They come not so much from defect of law as from violation of law. Man is born of a corrupted seed. Of him it is said, Behold, I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin hath my mother conceived me. Before man has seen the world's light he has known the world's darkness. The child does not come clean into the world, it must be washed or ever it is born. Its birth is not in honor, but in dishonor; not in glory, but in shame. The mystery of iniquity works in it from the beginning.

Therefore, a man needs not only to be generated, but also to be regenerated. He must be born not only of the flesh but of the spirit. He needs the water of regeneration to wash away the soil of his nature, and the fire of the Spirit to burn away the dross. And these two purifying elements are always at hand. Whenever the air is foul the storm comes, bringing the lightning and the rain.

The process of purification is not only

severe, it is long. A man's evil nature follows him like a shadow. It follows him because it is a shadow. It is the image of himself as cast by the light of God's holiness. Because of this a man must be melted in the furnace of affliction and recast in the image of God. Inward principle and outward forces combine to cleanse the life. The hardness of the world and the sadness of the heart make a man to mourn, and mourning is a method of cleansing. Water of tears and fire of pain are never wanting to purify the soul. This world is not only a probation, it is a purification also. Evil works itself to the surface in order that it may be purged away. The misery of the wicked man leads him to repentance. Time and growth are great helps to purity. We outgrow our youthful lusts and the heart forgets its ambition. To Napoleon at St. Helena Empire was a vain thing. It was no longer a reality, but a bitter memory. Reflection brought wisdom, and he ceased to desire to reign. Our purity is God's greatest care, for without it we cannot see Him.

THIRD CONSIDERATION.—Growth not only brings purification, it also gives outlook. As we grow taller we see more. The higher up the mountain a man goes the wider stretch of country lies around him. As soon as a man is conscious of a past, he also becomes conscious of a future. He looks onward and sees the years coming to meet him, and he wonders what they will bring him. Of all the mysteries that encompass man's life, duration is the most mysterious. Man measures time, but he cannot tell what it is. Is it a real thing or only a condition of his own thought. Where are the years now that shall be in the centuries to come. Have they any present existence. That they are coming we are certain. The past assures us of the future. Ten thousand times ten thousand years ago the dog star was shining in the heavens, and ten thousand times ten thousand years to come, he will shine there still. As we grow into life we gaze in the future, we see not only time, but events. We try to find out what shall befall us in the latter day. Of old, God sent his prophets to warn man to flee from the wrath to come. But the

gift of prophecy belongs to every man that will use it. The future does not come by chance, but by law. It is in making now. Underneath the waters of the ocean new continents are building. In the slums of the cities revolutions are preparing. We see before us by looking back. The past reflects, the present contains the future. Coming events cast their shadows before. The aged Simeon held the infant Christ in his arms and when he prophesied he did not look out he looked down. He was gazing not on the face of the years, but on the face of infant Christ. That face was the future. In it he saw the light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of the people of Israel. In the little hand he saw the scepter of righteousness which was to rule the nations as a rod of iron and break them in pieces like a potter's vessel. He looked on the brightness of that face and he saw the nations come to its light and Kings to the brightness of its rising. He saw in that arm a power to cast down the idols in their temples, to overthrow the might Thor, to light the fires of holiness in the dark woods

of Europe, to build church and convent on every high hill, to ring the bells for Matins and for Evensong. All the vast revolution that destroyed the Roman and created the Christian civilization was in the Christ, and he who really saw the Christ, saw the revolution. To grow is to see. The more we have of the past the more we comprehend of the future. This is experience, an old man knows what will happen, because he knows what has happened. Our Lord's presentation in the Temple was an evidence of growth, it was a process of purification, and it was a point of outlook. His vision was from pain to pain. From the pain of the circumcision to the pain crucifixion.

FOURTH CONSIDERATION.—The great thought underlying this whole mystery is the idea of law. They brought the child Jesus to do for Him after the custom of the law. The purification of St. Mary was commanded by the law. It was not an arbitrary demand of her personally but a part of a vast system of ceremonial cleansing which included all the house of Jacob. Simeon the prophet was just

or obedient to law and Anna the prophetess served God night and day. The growth of Jesus and the prophecy of Simeon were both according to law, the law of increase governed the one, the law of insight the other. It has been left for our own times to discover that God is not will, but law. That His decrees are eternal decrees. His law like the law of the Medes and Persians which altereth not. There is only one way for Daniel to escape the den of lions and that is to obey the King's commandment. There is only one way to escape the wrath of God, and that is by keeping His commandments. A broken law always avenges itself. Lower law is subject to higher law. The law of Moses to the higher law of Christ. The law of unreason to the law of reason, not by destroying but by fulfilling it. A divine law cannot be broken. He who violates divine law will be broken, broken as on a wheel. Whosoever falleth on this stone shall be broken, but on whomsoever it shall fall it shall grind him to powder.

THE AFFECTION which this meditation should stir up in thy heart is the desire for holy obedience, love to obey. Seek to follow not arbitrary will, thine own nor another, but divine law. If thou wilt grow unto thy full estate, obey for all thine increase is under the rule of law. Dost thou desire to purify thyself even as He is pure then obey, for obedience is better than sacrifice. Wilt thou call thine the future years and count on them for happiness then obey, for obedience is happiness. Walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless and thou shall compel Gabriel to come from the presence of God to pronounce thy blessing.

RESOLVE.—To seek this day to do the will of God in that which is least and in that which is greatest.

Meditation V.

THE FINDING OF THE LORD JESUS IN THE
TEMPLE.

SCENE.—The Jericho Road and the
Temple.

MYSTERY—LIFE'S LOSS AND GAIN.

First Consideration—Losing.

Second Consideration—Seeking.

Third Consideration—Finding.

Fourth Consideration—Joy of finding.

Affection—Patience.

Resolution—Daily search.

It was noontide on the Jericho road. A vast multitude of men and women, of asses and of camels, were moving eastward toward the fords of the Jordan. All sorts and conditions of men were there. The beggar in his rags ; the proud Rabbi with his fringes sweeping the ground ; rich publicans ambling on white asses ; sturdy Gallilean fishermen walking beside them ; a Roman of consular rank in purple-bordered toga riding at the head of his cohort ; a Greek merchant followed by his train of camels ; women pausing by the wayside to care for their children ; boys and girls running to and fro, now losing, now finding their friends. As far as the eye could reach there was an undulating mass of white robes and dark faces. There was a confusion of sound as men talked, women called, children cried, camels grunted and asses brayed.

This multitude was largely composed of Gallilean pilgrims returning from Jerusalem, where they had been to keep the Feast of the Passover. They had killed and eaten the Paschal lamb ; they had offered the festal

sacrifice ; they had waved the sheave offering, the first fruits of the barley field, before the Lord ; they had listened to the teachings of the scribes in the porches of the temple ; they had mingled in the life of the city. Rumors of insurrection had reached their ears. They had seen the faces of the Zealots gather blackness as the hated Roman passed by ; they had speculated together as to when God would deliver His people and restore the kingdom again to Israel. As yet there were no signs of His coming. The Roman ensign floated from the tower of Antonio, and the Roman legion was strongly encamped in the city. But the great feast day with its grand ceremonial of worship was over. Political and ecclesiastical gossip had exhausted itself. The men were anxious to get back to their work, the women to their homes, and so crowds were leaving Jerusalem.

But while the great flow over the Jericho road was eastward there were two persons, a man and a woman, who were making their way painfully against the tide of travel.

They were going to instead of from Jerusalem. They had about them the restless air of seekers. Their faces expressed the painful anxiety of their hearts. They went from company to company asking eagerly for somewhat which they did not find. Disappointment followed every inquiry. For two days they had been thus coming back seeking for what they had lost. And now at noon-tide, on this the third day, they found themselves near to Jerusalem. They had set out from the city light of heart and were returning very heavy. When they went out they thought themselves full, but in a moment of bitterness they found themselves empty. They thought their child was with them, but when they came to look for Him they could not find Him. He was not with them nor with their kinfolk and acquaintances. So they had nothing else to do but to go back the way they had come and seek for Him.

And now they had reached the crest of the Mount of Olives, and looking sadly down upon the city they wondered where they would find the child. Was He yet alive? had

He been crushed by the crowd? had He fallen out by the way? was He lost in the narrow streets, lead astray by the sights of the city? had some wicked person stolen Him to sell Him for a slave? Sad forbodings filled the heart as these two, wearied with their six days' journey, set about the almost hopeless task of seeking for a child in the midst of a million of people. They wisely determined to begin their search at the point of departure. They went at once to the temple, the man looking in the court of the men, the woman searching the court of the women, and their spirits failed them as they saw each the other coming empty handed. They looked through the porches, but they could not find Him. The wide spaces of the temple filled them with despair.

Well nigh hopeless they turn at last to the Chambers of the Scribes. Not expecting to find a youth of twelve years in these halls of learning, but they go through them simply because there is no where else to go. And at last they come to a chamber that is full of people engaged in eager discussion, and there

in the midst of the teachers both hearing them, and asking them questions, is the child they had lost. His face is beaming with light and all around him are aged men hanging upon His word, astonished at His understanding and answers. The mother and her husband look on for a while in amazement and at last relief finds expression in indignation, and the mother cries and says, Son why hast thou thus dealt with us, thy father and I have sought the sorrowing. He turns His wrapt face toward her and gazes at her with a far away look and answers How is it that ye sought me, whist ye not that I must be about my Father's business. But He did not set heavenly against earthly duty. The voice of His mother was nearer than the voice of His Father. He heard that voice and obeyed. He left the congenial precincts of the temple and went with His parents to Nazareth and was subject unto them.

FIRST CONSIDERATION.—This scene of the finding of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in the temple presents to the understanding the mystery of life's loss and gain.

The course of man's life is not straight, it is zig zag. Like the branches of a tree he must twist downward in order to grow upward. If we compare man's life to a journey up a mountain side then the way is too steep for him, he must make many curves and turns that often bring him back nearly to his starting point. If we say man sails across the waters of life then the winds are contrary and he must tack continually. His life is a constant succession of losses. He first loses the unconsciousness of childhood. A child does not know self. It is conscious only of its emotion. It feels joy and grief but it does not reflect upon them. Because it does not know, it does not seek in any way to change itself. It does not try to hide the feelings of the heart. It is terribly true. When it is happy it laughs, when it is grieved it cries. What it thinks it says. It is swayed by the passion of the moment, like the little lake in the meadow, the child is placid when there is a calm and ruffled when the wind blows. This unconsciousness is the charm of the child. His is the Kingdom of Heaven,

he has no yesterday nor to-morrow, he lives in an eternal now.

But there comes a time when this artlessness is lost. The child comes to a knowledge of himself. He reflects on his behaviour. He wonders how he appears to others. He no longer dares to say what he thinks nor do as he feels ; he is afraid to smile and ashamed to cry. This is a sad loss. The child which but awhile ago was free as the bird becomes awkward and constrained. He does not know where to find himself, he is no longer a child and not yet a man. He has to seek for that unconscious life until he finds it again.

The second great loss in life is that of traditional faith. All our first beliefs and opinions are received at second hand. When we start in life we have nothing of our own ; only the traditions of the fathers. We believe not because we see for ourselves, but because the woman hath told us. Our faith rests upon the unconscious belief in the wisdom and integrity of the elders. But there comes a time when this is no longer possible. The youth goes out into life. He finds there are

people beyond the mountains. The world is wider than he thought. He hears there doctrines which he was never taught at home. Coming thus in conflict with antagonistic opinion, his own mind wakens up. He must give a reason for the faith that is in him. It will never do to say my mother told me so, that will only bring a man into contempt. Each must discover for himself what he believes and why he believes it. And this process of discovery leads him to doubt many things which he had before received as true.

God has not so arranged the universe that infallibility lodges under my roof tree. And this beginning of doubt fills the heart with terror. The foundations are cast down, the world seems retreating to chaos. When the eyes of the blind are opened, then he sees men as trees walking, When the guide of youth fails, then the fearful soul cries out, to whom shall we go, who has the words of eternal life.

This state is one of great danger. The lost faith must be found again or the life will be

lost also. The traveller will perish who does not know his way out of the woods. The sailor will never come into port who has neither chart nor compass.

The third great loss which befalls a man is the loss of interest in life. The entrance upon an active career is a time of great enthusiasm. The exercise of faculty fills the heart with joy. It is a delight to work, for work employs thought. But by and by work becomes routine. The handicraft is mastered and the fingers follow unconsciously the lines of habit. And the rewards of life are not satisfying. The game is not worth the candle, and the soul grows sick of living. The man has "the disease of forty years." Here again he is in danger.

A life without interest can never be a great life. A ship cannot sail without wind nor an engine run without steam. The interest must be found again or the life will rot in stagnation. Not only is the natural life subject to losses, but such misfortunes happen to the spiritual life also. The young convert enjoys the sweetness of God's presence. His very

youth brings him nearer to God. He is the lamb which the Lord carries in His bosom, but when he grows stronger the Shepherd puts him down and drives him with the flock. He does not carry he only feeds him. The dry and dusty road, the hard and scanty pasture are not so soft as the shepherd's bosom. All the sweetness goes out of life with its weakness. Babies are fondled, not grown men and women. This loss of conscious consolation is serious. It makes many conversions to be in vain. When the fires of zeal die down as die down they must, then these in despair neglect to cover the coals with ashes and the fire goes out altogether, and the heart is as dead as a clinker.

SECOND CONSIDERATION.—The state of loss is a state of transition. It is not one in which the life can rest. When the loss is known then the search begins. A man will spend ten dollars without concern, but the loss of one will fill him with uneasiness. We cannot without great effort be content with loss. It is not natural. A woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one of them will

light a candle and sweep the house and scarch diligently until she find it. The process of search is very painful, and the longer it continues the harder it is to bear.

The heart grows ever more anxious as the trembling hands turning over the papers fail to find the missing will. When search grows wearisome there is always a temptation to give it up. We conclude that the thing is lost and we will look for it no longer, but will provide some cheap substitute for it. We have lost our diamond we cry for a moment, why there, there, there a diamond gone cost me two thousand ducats in Frankfort. But after a vain search for a while we say, go to, the diamond is lost, let us make us a diamond of paste instead. No one will know the difference and it will save us trouble. We lose our faith in man's word, to find God's word instead is a great labor. To seek for that we must go out into the desert, and up into the mountain. And we cry to ourselves we cannot find the truth, let us believe a lie. It takes long to find sincerity, let us put up with a convention. Let us say we believe whatever

it is necessary to believe and go about our business. Let the lips hide the heart. We have lost the consolations of God, to find them again means reconversion, let us go on without them and put up with the consolations of the world.

It is the horror of many lives that they are passed in a state of conscious loss. A loss which the life is striving to hide from itself, from the world and from God. Far better is the terror of search than the deadness of despair. It is better to be like St. Peter and weep bitterly, than to be like Judas and hang oneself. The search is never to be given over until the lost is found. That is God's way. He seeks until He finds it. And the only way is to go like SS. Joseph and Mary, back to the point of departure. Except ye be converted and become as little children ye cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Ye must be born again. This going back is never pleasant. It seems such a waste of time. We have come so far down the wrong road, why not go the wrong road to the end. Simply because we do not want to go the place the

wrong road leads to. We shall have to come back at last ; better go back at once. It is a shame to lose for that shows carelessness. The shame of loss must be cured by the pain of search.

THIRD CONSIDERATION. — Seeking is followed by finding. Search continued long and carefully enough will find a needle in a hay stack. We think it strange that the thing we search for is in the very last place in which we look, forgetting that when we find we cease to look, and hence it must be in the last place. The eyes of SS. Mary and Joseph opened wide with amazement when they found the Child Jesus in the chamber of the Scribe. They never thought to find Him here. They looked there only because they had looked in vain elsewhere, and here at last they found Him. Discovery always comes when hope is dead. Columbus promised the rebellious sailors that if he did not find the land by such a day he would turn the ship about and head for Spain. Just as the time expired ; when the day was about to dawn which should be to him a day of

failure, he saw in the early morning darkness the lights burning on the Island of San Salvador. If we look we must see; if we seek we must find.

But we do not find just what we look for. That which we find is better than what we had lost. The diamond gathers new luster from lying on the ground. Jesus in the temple was greater in the eyes of His mother than he had ever been in the home or the school. There is an unconsciousness of manhood and womanhood that is much grander than the unconsciousness of childhood. The one is temporary because it is instinctive; it has cost nothing. The other is permanent because it is acquired; it is a pearl of great price. The man has found himself and his place. He feels perfectly at home in that state of life into which it has pleased God to call him. He does not need to assert himself, for no one denies him his rights; he does not need to think of his manners, for he knows his behavior is becoming. He is no longer the little pool stirred by the little breeze. It takes much to move him, but

when he is excited by righteous cause then he, like the child, shows what is in him. Sometimes it is terrible. The storm of passion breaks, the waves run high and fierce, and the crested foam breaks against the shore. When Washington found Lee retreating from the field of Monmouth he rose in his stirrups and poured out upon him the vials of his wrath so fierce and hot that the old man withered in the heat and never recovered ; and when, as President, the same Washington heard of St. Clair's useless and stupid defeat he stormed so that those who were round about him sat still in blanched silence till the storm was spent. He stormed because he was conscious not of himself, but of the great wrong done his country. A cultured man, like a child, speaks as he thinks and does as he feels, because he thinks truly and feels rightly. The most charming thing in all the world is the unconscious smile of welcome on a woman's face. Sunlight breaking on the lake is not half so beautiful as eyes that brighten simply because they are glad to see. The lost childhood is found again in the

self-centered but not self-conscious manhood.

When the lost faith is found it is no longer hearsay, it is experience. We are able to say to the woman now, we believe, not because of thy word, but because we have seen Him ourselves and know of a surety that this is the Christ that should come into the world. Faith, which is the result of conscious search, can never be lost. As soon can the trained eye lose the sense of color as the trained heart lose the sight of God. The color is in the eye and the God is in the heart. The eye must fail and the heart perish before the color can be lost and the God wanting. As the children say, "findings is keepings."

And the consolations which fill the heart of the time-worn saint are far more precious than those which puff up the neophyte. The last is glad from a sense of sins forgiven, the first from a sense of duty done. He has looked for consolation everywhere, and found it at last in his self-denials. He sees his rainbow of promise through his tears. Interest in life is found again when the end of life is put first, the means last; when a man does

not live to eat, but eats to live ; when his work has an object' beyond his own petty necessities. Peter Cooper passed the last years of his life spending for the good of others what he had earned in his first years, and his last years were the best. Silas Marner found the living Eppie far more interesting than the lost gold. A keen interest in the affairs of church and state more than compensates for loss of interest in personal concerns. When a man's self is stale, then he can find freshness in the greenwood under the clear sky. Larger life is keener life. He who enters into the life of his neighbors enters more deeply into his own life.

FOURTH CONSIDERATION.—The greatest joy of life is the joy of finding. When Archemides, sitting in his bath, found at last the long sought for solution of his problem, he ran naked through the streets of Syracuse shouting like a very boy, "*Eureka ! eureka !*" When the shepherd finds his sheep, the woman her piece of silver, then they call their friends and neighbors together and say, Rejoice with me, for I have found that which

I had lost. It was meet that we should make merry and be glad for this thy brother was lost and is found ; he was dead and is alive again. First possession is nothing, recovered possession is everything. Always rich, never rich. Riches lost and riches found make riches to be valued. The heart that mourns is the heart that is glad. A life without losses is a life without joys. Bereavement is the mother of possession. When there is a voice heard in Rama, lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children and refused to be comforted for her children, because they are not. Then the consoling cry is, thus saith the Lord : Refrain thy voice from weeping and thine eyes from tears, for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord, and they shall come again from the hand of the enemy, and there is hope in thine end that thy children shall come again to their own border. The understanding has now unfolded the fifth and last of the joyful mysteries, and we learn that life's losses are life's gains. What God borrows He pays again with interest.

THE AFFECTION which this meditation demands of the soul is the affection of patience. If the soul would gain her losses, she must love to suffer. The way of the cross is the way back to God. He who loves not the pains of search will never find the lost sheep. The pierced hands and feet are the marks of the Shepherd's faithfulness in searching.

RESOLVE to seek after God by doing each day the painful right instead of the easy wrong.

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